

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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INFORMATION REPORT

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1. The role of the Central Committee of the CPSU following Stalin's death remains the same as before and, as before, the Central Committee plays no part in the formulation of Soviet policy. While before 1953 power was concentrated in the hands of Stalin, assisted by the Politburo, at the present time the same Politburo, now known as the Presidium of the Central Committee, is the repository of the political power in the Soviet Union. The difference in the situation, as it existed formerly and as it exists now, lies in the fact that, while Stalin wielded absolute power and brooked no opposition to his decisions, power is now divided among the top four or five persons. Although Malenkov is the strongest, the other members of this group do engage in debates and arguments with Malenkov, a situation which Stalin had never permitted to develop.

2. The rank and file of the Central Committee membership are merely officials implementing the policy decided upon by the top group. However, in order to present to the Party, and to the general public, a picture of collectivity (kollegialnost) in formulating Soviet policy, a certain amount of lip service is being paid to the collective principle, and articles and speeches of Soviet leaders refer to the Central Committee, supposedly an elective body administering the affairs of the Party, as the body making the decisions on national policy. This practice makes it possible to hold various members, or Secretaries, of the Central Committee who are not members of the Presidium responsible for errors either in policy or in its execution, while the actual policy makers, remaining in the background, are protected from any blame in this respect. It is true that the Central Committee meets more often now than it did before Stalin's death and thus an impression is created that it is an active policy-making body, since its meetings and the decisions supposedly made at these meetings are frequently mentioned in the Soviet press. However, it must be realized that these meetings, the speeches made there, and the resolutions adopted are prepared beforehand and carried out in accordance with pre-arranged schedules which are approved by

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the ruling group in the Presidium. The Central Committee may be likened to a body composed of high-level bureaucrats who are called together to receive instructions from the ruling group as to what policies are in effect and how they are to be carried out. The members of the Committee are then responsible, as the heads of various departments, to see that these instructions are carried out.

3. Under the Soviet system of dual functions, Government and Party, all Government agencies have a Party counterpart, and the Central Committee is responsible for the operation of the Party side in this dual system. Thus, the Central Committee is a tremendous bureaucratic machine having sub-divisions at all operating levels, covering all aspects of national activity. It is for this reason that constant reference is being made, both in the press and in conversation, to "the Central Committee", whereas actually the reference is to some level of the Communist Party mechanism of which the Central Committee officially is the top administrative echelon. At the same time, this top-level echelon is an administrative body and not a policy-making body, and one which merely implements the decisions made, ostensibly in its name, by the very few leaders in the Presidium of the Committee.

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